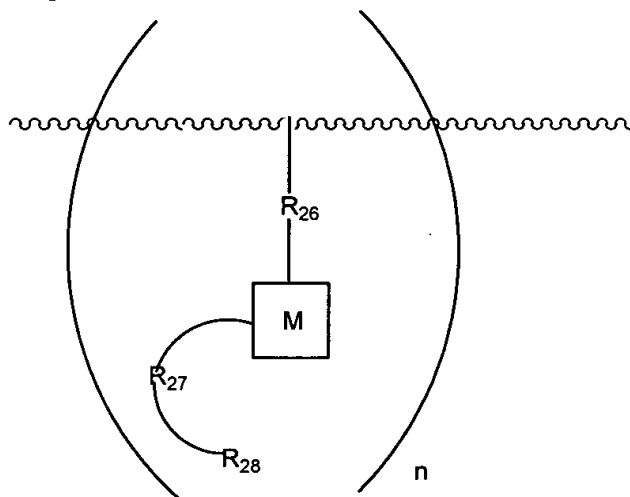


Amendments to the claims:

Claims 1-11 (cancelled)

12. (Previously presented) A composition comprising:
- a) a polymer;
 - b) at least one MRI agent comprising:
 - i) at least one chelator comprising a paramagnetic metal ion; and,
 - ii) a blocking moiety covalently attached to said chelator which hinders the rapid exchange of water in the remaining coordination sites, wherein said blocking moiety will interact with a target substance such that the exchange of water in the remaining coordination sites is increased; and
 - c) a linker group attaching said MRI agent to said polymer.
13. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claim [[1]] 12 having the formula comprising:



wherein

~~~~~ is a polymer

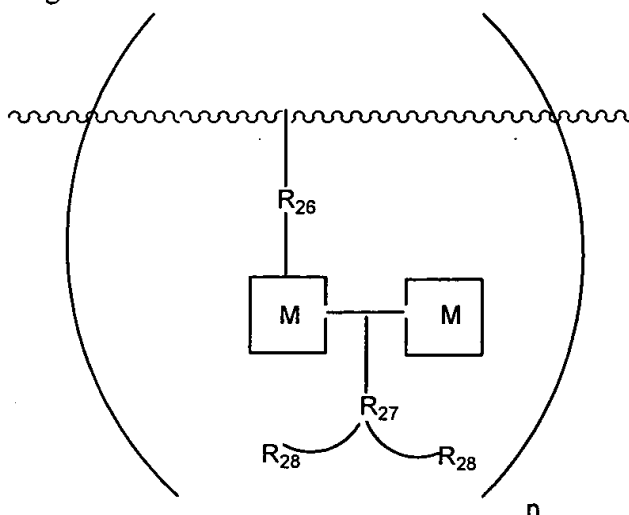
M is a chelator comprising a paramagnetic metal ion;

R<sub>26</sub> and R<sub>27</sub> are linker groups;

R<sub>28</sub> is a blocking moiety; and,

n is an integer.

14. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claim [[1]] 12 having the formula comprising:



wherein

~~~~~ is a polymer;

M is a chelator comprising a paramagnetic metal ion;

R₂₆ and R₂₇ are linker groups;

R₂₈ is a blocking moiety; and

n is an integer.

15. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claims [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein said paramagnetic metal ion is selected from the group comprising gadolinium III (Gd⁺³ or Gd(III)), iron III (Fe⁺³ or Fe(III)), manganese II (Mn⁺² or Mn(II)), dysprosium (Dy⁺³ or Dy(III)), or chromium (Cr⁺³ or Cr(III)).

16. (Previously presented) An MRI agent according to claim 15 where said paramagnetic ion is Gd(III).

17. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claims [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein said linker groups are alkyl groups.

18. (Previously presented) An MRI agent according to claim 17 wherein said alkyl groups are substituted alkyl groups.

19. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claims [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein said linker groups are aryl groups.

20. (Previously presented) An MRI agent according to claims 19 wherein said aryl groups are substituted aryl groups.

21. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claims [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein at least one of said linker groups are selected from the group comprising p-aminobenzyl, methyl, ethyl, propyl, butyl, pentyl, hexyl, propionic acid, aminobutyl, p-alkyl phenols, and 4-alkylimidazaole.

22. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claims [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein said blocking moiety is a peptide.

23. (Previously amended) An MRI agent according to claim 22 wherein said peptide binds to a metalloproteinase.

Claim 24 (cancelled)

25. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claims [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein said polymer is selected from the group comprising functionalized dextrans, styrene polymers, polyethylene, polyanionic polymers, polycationic polymers, and mixed polymers.

26. (Previously presented) An MRI agent according to claim 25 wherein said polycation is polylysine.

27. (Currently amended) An MRI agent according to claim [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 wherein said polymer comprises a plurality of said MRI agents.

28. (Currently amended) A method of magnetic resonance imaging of a cell, tissue or patient comprising administering an MRI agent according to claim [[1, 2, or 3]] 12, 13, or 14 to a cell, tissue or patient and rendering a magnetic resonance image of said cell, tissue or patient.

29. (Previously presented) An MRI agent according to claim 12, 13, or 14 wherein

~~~~~ is a dextran polymer;

M is a DOTA chelator comprising a Gd(III) paramagnetic metal ion;

R<sub>26</sub> and R<sub>27</sub> are alkyl linker groups;

R<sub>28</sub> is the peptide blocking moiety PMALWMR; and,

n is an integer.

30. (Previously presented) An MRI agent according to claim 23 wherein said peptide is selected from the group comprising PELR (SEQ ID NO: 8), PLGLAR (SEQ ID NO: 9), PGLWA-(D-arg) (SEQ ID NO: 10), PMALWMR (SEQ ID NO: 11), and PMGLRA (SEQ ID NO:12).